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The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 5, 2011, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

GOVERNMENT'S AUTO PILOT DOWNWARD SPIRAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. For weeks now, we've faced the artificial Republican debt crisis, which was a crisis of Republican choice. And now with an agreement coming forward, we should ask the question: Is this worse than the default scare? Well, it's hardly clear. What about a government on auto pilot, locked into a slow downward spiral?

First, this empowers the most reckless and extreme elements, not just in the House Republicans today but is a blueprint for mischief for either party in the future. Next, we are starting down a path of budget cuts that all experts assure us will weaken the economy at exactly the time we need to strengthen economic growth, not reduce demand. Clearly it is a step backwards from reforming how the country does business.

The fixation on triggers, formulas, and supercommittees will make it easier for Congress to duck the difficult policy work and harder to do it, if Congress wants to try.

Even as it would appear we avoid outright default, this agreement casts a long-term shadow over our Nation's reasonableness and our reliability for the next 2 years and beyond. And remember the drama over the continuing resolution earlier this year? There are still two potential government shutdowns over the next 14 months that will invite more legislative blackmail over an extreme agenda since it's clear that recklessness works.

This is all the more frustrating because the path forward is clear. The public strongly supports a balanced approach which would include tax reform that would raise money while making the Tax Code more fair and simple.

Everyone knows we must deal with health care costs; and until recently, there was bipartisan agreement as to how to do that. We should accelerate the health care reforms which are already enacted into law but do it faster to improve care and lower costs.

Do we need to require a commission to implement bipartisan suggestions to right-size the military, both its mission and its budget? Absolutely not. There are ideas floating around and support on both sides of the aisle to do that now.

Most important, perhaps, we should revitalize the economy by rebuilding and renewing America, financed by modest increases in user fees. One of the things that is actually the most simple would be to implement bipartisan suggestions to reform agriculture, to save money while helping people who farm and people who eat by reducing massive unnecessary subsidies to large agribusiness.

This agreement delays the important work while it weakens both the economy and the decision-making process. Government on auto pilot in a slow downward spiral is not a victory.

THE REPUBLICAN SOLUTION TO THE DEBT CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. REED). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Well, here we are, after a long weekend of hyperbole and backroom deal cutting at the White House, and here's the product right here.

If you look through it, it's pretty interesting. There's no balance. There are no revenues. God forbid we would ask, as the Republicans call them, "the job creators," the millionaires and billionaires, to pay anything toward further supporting our country, to close some of the tax loopholes that allow hedge fund managers to pay taxes at half the rate of their clerks, you know, things like that. No, that would be a reach too far to ask them to share in the sacrifice.

What we do see here is that there will be cuts, and very few are specified. But strangely enough, there's one that the Republicans always go after because, you know, they hang out at the country club, and at the country club, nobody's worried about putting their kid through college. But the one specified cut in here is in graduate school financial assistance.

Now, that's kind of peculiar. We have a doctor shortage looming, and medical school is phenomenally expensive. But I guess it's just going to be the rich kids who are going to go to medical school in the future, not the middle-class kids, not the struggling kids. Just the rich kids. So that's the one specified cut, the "one" specified cut. The rest, we don't even know.

Talking about a pig in a poke, this is a pig in a poke. Where's that \$1 trillion of cuts going to come from? First round, second round, another \$1.5 trillion, and not one penny in revenues. And the grand result is about \$2.5 trillion of deficit reduction.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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If we just let all the Bush tax cuts expire—all of them—if we went back to the bad old days of the Clinton tax rates that the Republicans claimed would destroy the economy—except actually what happened was, we had 3.8 percent unemployment, and we paid down debt with the Clinton tax rates. But, yes, “the job creators” had to pay a little bit more. Those were really bad times, the Republicans would have us believe. So we don’t want to go back there. We want to stay in the current day.

We have been cutting taxes now for 11 years of Bush tax cuts, 3 years with Obama as a coconspirator on the Bush tax cuts. Where are the jobs? Well, let’s just keep doing it, and maybe it will create jobs.

It’s not going to create jobs. There are no jobs. There are no jobs in this package.

At the least, at the least, they could have extended the Federal Aviation Administration authority. Now, most people think, what does that mean? Well, a week ago last Friday, authority to run the Federal Aviation Administration expired. The air traffic controllers are working under emergency provisions, and they’re being paid out of the trust fund, which is being drawn down. But all of the taxes went away. So we’re walking away from \$200 million a week—that is in taxes that would come from users of the system. Most of the airlines have raised their ticket prices to capture that money.

Four thousand Federal employees have lost their jobs or are laid off, are collecting unemployment. Republicans don’t care about Federal employees; so let’s put that aside.

□ 1010

But 90,000 private sector construction workers and small businesses are also unemployed because we have brought all the safety and security improvements across the entire system to a screeching halt because we are not collecting taxes, which the airlines are now capturing for profits. Could that be in here? That would put 94,000 people back to work. No, that’s not in here. That’s too much to ask.

There isn’t a single job in this package. The biggest problem in America, the greatest deficit we have is in job creation. If we could get back down around 5 percent unemployment, guess what: Those people are working, they are not drawing unemployment benefits, they are not drawing food stamps because they are desperate to put food on the table and the unemployment isn’t enough, and a quarter of the deficit would go away with people working.

How about transportation infrastructure? One hundred and fifty thousand bridges are crumbling, need to be replaced or rehabilitated; a \$70 billion backlog in critical investment in our transit systems across the country, all made in America, manufacturing jobs, engineering jobs. No, can’t do those sorts of things in this bill.

We can’t make investments because the Republicans say everything government does is bad. So we can’t even make investments. We can’t discriminate between wasteful spending, consumptive spending, and investments that will put people back to work, as they claim government can’t put people back to work.

That’s funny. I wonder who built our national highway system. I don’t think it was the private sector. I don’t think it was the financiers on Wall Street. The billionaires and the millionaires are escaping any meaningful taxation at this point, seeing the lowest level of taxation on their incomes since, you know, forever, basically.

We can’t ask them to do anything. We can’t invest, we can’t create jobs, and we are going to cut student financial aid for sure and a few other things.

DEBT CEILING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, we will be gathering this morning in a number of conferences and caucuses to assess the work over the weekend that addresses a procedural process that most Americans were never made aware of for the last 100 times since 1917, that we raise the debt ceiling. It is tragic that these two words have become such dastardly words in the American psychic and the American vocabulary, and it has been characterized as reckless spending in Washington more than what it is, which most Americans do at the end of the month, and that is to pay their bills.

I had the privilege of joining in a balanced budget process in the 1990s, and, frankly, it was a joy. It was good to do good things in a bipartisan manner on behalf of the American people.

Out of that process came something called the Children’s Health Insurance Program that helped insure, over these last couple of years, millions and millions of children and, yes, we had a balanced budget. In the course of it, of course, in the rush of doing that budget we skewed the reimbursements for physicians, the doctors that you see in your hamlets and villages and counties and cities and States, the doctors that many of you send to medical school who happen to be your children, the doctors who take an oath to care for the American people.

Yes, we skewed their reimbursement. So, now, every year we have to confront the unfairness of how we reimburse our doctors, the doctors who work in public health institutions, county hospitals, clinics. This is what happens when you rush to do something that should be ordinary.

So today I rise looking towards the meetings that will go on today. In many of them we will huddle together to try and do the right thing. But I asked months ago for us to raise the

debt ceiling, as has been done 17 times for the President of the United States, President Reagan and other Presidents who have asked to have that done, and then begin to look long term. As Mark Zandi has indicated, and a number of economists have said, immediate cuts will be damaging to this economy.

But I rise today to speak of the vulnerable persons who really can’t speak for themselves. Many people think seniors have lobbyists in one of the major, largest, if you will, lobbying group for seniors, and they do a great job.

But I know seniors who really are huddled in small apartments and old, old homes left to them by their deceased spouse, something they paid for but has deteriorated over the years. Because we are not helping seniors with their rehab anymore, and many of them got reverse mortgages that really took them to the cleaners and left them with nonperforming contractors who did a poor job on their homes, these are the seniors who don’t have voices.

Or, maybe, the vulnerable families in Latino and African American communities where the wealth distinction has showed, where our majority Americans, white Americans, have a wealth factor of \$113,000; and, respectively, African Americans have \$5,000; and Hispanics, Latinos at \$6,000. Now that doesn’t cover all. There are people in Appalachia and other places around the Nation where that disparity is very, very strong.

But it does mean that there is a population of vulnerable Americans. And the question is whether or not the approach that we are going to take today in doing something as simple as raising the debt ceiling to allow us to pay our bills has a dastardly part to it that causes the laying off of hundreds of thousands of Americans because there is no job creation.

Because when you cause us to stop spending money to encourage the economy to move such as the 3 million jobs that were created with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, then there is no job creation. Our private sector is not moving as fast as we would like.

We hope this will spur them on, but I have heard that before. I have heard, during the TARP and the bailout of banks, just give us a chance. And you ask any small business around America whether they are able to access capital to build their structure and their business, small businesses that I truly believe are the backbone of America. If we did nothing on this floor but every day do something, give a gift to small businesses and health care, give a gift to them in tax relief, give a gift to them in incentive to grow their business, and you would see Americans being hired.

Small businesses are as small as one individual sitting in front of their computer. That is what we should be doing.